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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO
INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES
AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE
PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS
OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Letter dated 31 January 1997 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the text of a communiqué issued by the Palestinian leadership at its meeting held in Gaza City on 31 January 1997.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter and its annex distributed as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 33, 35 and 85, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nasser AL-KIDWA
Permanent Observer of Palestine
to the United Nations

ANNEX

[Original: Arabic]

Communiqué issued by the Palestinian leadership at its meeting held in Gaza City on 31 January 1997

The Palestinian leadership is concerned over the decisions recently taken by the Israeli Government and Israeli military leaders, as they threaten to bring about the failure of all the efforts being made to get the peace process back on track.

On 19 January 1997, i.e., two days after the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron had been signed, General Uzi Dayan issued decree No. 393 forbidding the inhabitants of the old city of Hebron from making repairs to their houses, and Israeli forces began arresting all those engaging in such work. At the time of the promulgation of this decree, which runs counter to both the spirit and the letter of the Protocol, the Israeli Government was allowing Israeli settlers, under the protection of the Israeli occupation forces, to enlarge one settlement and build new ones.

On 27 January 1997, in blatant violation of the agreement signed by the two parties, the occupation forces expelled the Arab al-Jahalin tribe from their dwellings in the Abu Dis area of Jerusalem in order to make room for the expansion of the Maaleh Adumim settlement. They also prohibited the use of the Bilal Mosque (Qubbat Rahil) and locked the building.

In recent weeks the Israeli Government has taken a number of decisions approving the expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, including the Holy City of Jerusalem. They have withdrawn the identity cards of Palestinian residents in Jerusalem in order to Judaize that city. Decrees have authorized the appropriation of land and the continuation of work on the construction of bypass roads. Houses have been demolished and their inhabitants expelled. The policy of closure, blockade and suppression continues to be implemented against the Palestinian people, and emergency vehicles and fire engines donated by the Japanese Government more than three months ago continue to be denied entry. Shipments of food and medical supplies donated by a number of countries are held up for lengthy periods at the international crossing points and in the ports.

Furthermore, in contravention of the agreements reached, Israel announced on 25 January 1997 that the sum of 70 million new shekels which is due to the Palestinian Authority in respect of taxes and customs for the previous month would not be transferred, as part of the blockade on the Authority.

To date, the Joint Commission on the release of women prisoners and other detainees has not met; the Israeli Government is creating obstacles to safe passage between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and has prevented European companies from starting work on the construction of the port to be financed by European countries, principally the Netherlands and France. Israel has also prohibited the operation of Gaza's international airport for more than six

months, in an effort to tighten its blockade against the Palestinian Authority and prevent the export of Palestinian goods. This blockade has resulted in daily losses of more than US$ 7 million, quite apart from the Israeli Government's refusal to settle outstanding accounts with the Palestinian Authority and transfer the monies owing to it, amounting to some hundreds of millions of dollars.

The pursuit by Israel of such practices threatens to cause the failure of all the efforts which have been made to get the peace process back on track, ensure the faithful application of the agreements signed, and the resumption of the final status negotiations on the basis of the agreed agenda, which includes the issues of Jerusalem, borders, settlements and refugees.

The Palestinian leadership, which has made and continues to make every possible effort to protect and ensure the continuation of the peace process, calls upon all countries, in particular those sponsoring the peace process, and the Arab and Islamic States, to take immediate and effective action to put a stop to these Israeli practices, give the peace process the opportunity it deserves and save the peace process from the ruin threatened by this dangerous Israeli policy.

The Palestinian leadership also renews its call to the Israeli Government to desist from all these practices, to annul the military decrees, and to proceed forthwith to the balanced implementation of all the provisions of the Interim Agreement, the settlement of outstanding issues and the resumption of the final status negotiations.

The pursuit of these practices will inevitably mean that opportunities to proceed with the peace process will be missed and will return the countries and peoples of the region to their former positions of confrontation and struggle. Such an outcome is to be avoided at all costs. What is needed, above all, is for the Israeli Government to desist from all the practices referred to above. Should it persist in its present course, the Israeli Government will bear sole responsibility for the failure of the peace process, and the consequent destructive effects on the countries and peoples of the region.